

CERT Empowers Citizens to Respond to Disasters

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training gives citizens the tools they need to respond to a disaster or assist first responders at an incident. CERT, which was designed by the LAFD for citizen response after an earthquake, has been taught in Missouri counties with an earthquake risk for almost 10 years. After the creation of Department of Homeland Security, CERT has become one of the cornerstones of Citizens Councils and citizen volunteerism.

Missouri has identified 47 counties at risk for damages along the New Madrid Seismic Zone. There are 34 communities with identified earthquake hazards teaching CERT. Those communities are: The Counties of Bollinger, Boone, Cape Girardeau, Clark, Cole, Dunklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Marion, Putnam, Scott, Shelby, St. Charles, St. Louis, Stoddard, Warren and Washington; and the Cities of Kirksville, Columbia, Revere, Pacific, Washington, Arnold, Portageville, St. Charles, Wentzville, Farmington, Ballwin, Chesterfield, Creve Coeur, Earth City, Ellisville, Eureka, Fenton, Ferguson, Florissant, Hazelwood, Manchester, Maplewood, Overland, University City, Wildwood, and St. Louis City.

The following businesses are conducting CERT training courses for either their employees or are conducting neighborhood outreach: State Capitol Complex in Jefferson City, Missouri Department of Transportation in Scott County, Ironworkers District in St. Louis, Metro West Fire Protection District in St. Louis, Southwestern Bell Corporation in St. Louis, AmeriCorps in St. Louis and Kingston School District in Washington.

The 20-hours of CERT training teaches basic skills to respond to an emergency until help arrives. In Missouri, local CERT instructors are teaching these skills to businesses (such as Southwestern Bell, banks and building managers), scouts, school staffs and teachers, clubs and organizations, neighborhood groups, communities of faith, and emergency preparedness volunteers.

Just how effective is the CERT training? CERT graduates in Missouri used the knowledge to respond to emergencies. An Explorer Scout set up flares and directed traffic at the scene of an auto fatality accident. A building maintenance worker checked and opened the airway of an elderly woman who fell at the State Capitol complex. A safety officer used a fire extinguisher and evacuated workers from an office.

During the 20-hour course, team members learn how to:

- Describe types of hazards most likely to affect their homes and communities (earthquakes, flooding, tornadoes).
- Learn roles and responsibilities in an immediate response.
- Work as a team to apply basic fire suppression.
- Apply techniques for opening airways, controlling bleeding and treating shock.
- Employ basic treatments for various wounds and Perform head-to-toe assessments
- Select and set up a treatment area.
- Identify planning and size-up requirements for potential search and rescue. And use safe techniques for victim extrication.

If you would like more information about CERT training, please contact your local Emergency Management Agency Director or the State Emergency Management Agency website: **sema.dps.mo.gov**